

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3802
specter.senate.gov

September 21, 2009

The Honorable Joseph Biden
The Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

JOE

I write regarding the substandard condition of many Amtrak bridges in Philadelphia, as described in a September 20, 2009 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article.

According to the article, Amtrak owns 302 bridges in the Philadelphia region, of which 143 were rated as "poor" or worse during inspections over the past two years. I am deeply troubled by this report, as I suspect are many of my constituents as well as Amtrak riders from the region, who depend on rail transportation and traverse these bridges daily. Amtrak provides a vital service for the entire nation and you have been a consistent advocate for Federal funding to maintain and enhance Amtrak operations and encourage increased ridership. It is critical that Amtrak riders have confidence that every measure is taken to ensure safe travel.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act appropriated \$1.3 billion to Amtrak for capital investment and I am informed that \$850 million is allocated to rebuild and modernize infrastructure and equipment. It is my understanding that Amtrak owns about 1,400 bridges in the United States and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article indicates that conditions in the Philadelphia region reflect a state of disrepair for Amtrak-owned bridges nationally. I strongly support ARRA funding to address this nation-wide problem. However, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, none of the funding is currently intended for use on bridges in the Philadelphia region.

In light of Amtrak's report on bridges in the Philadelphia region, I ask that you give full and fair consideration to allocating stimulus funding to help remedy the deficiencies described in the report. Additionally, I believe it is important to conduct a national study of Amtrak infrastructure and promptly devise a plan to address deficiencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Arlen Specter

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3802
specter.senate.gov

September 21, 2009

Mr. Joseph H. Boardman
Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Boardman:

I write regarding the substandard condition of many Amtrak bridges in Philadelphia, as described in a September 20, 2009 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article.


According to the article, Amtrak owns 302 bridges in the Philadelphia region, of which 143 were rated as "poor" or worse during inspections over the past two years. I am deeply troubled by this report. Thousands of my constituents from Philadelphia and the surrounding communities, as well as residents from bordering states, depend on rail transportation and traverse these bridges daily. They and I have a right to know that every measure is taken to ensure safe travel, and that when substandard conditions are discovered, a plan to remedy the deficiencies is devised and implemented.

I am sensitive to the budgetary constraints under which Amtrak operates and have consistently advocated for robust Federal investment in our National passenger rail system. Yet as Amtrak strives to increase ridership and secure its fiscal solvency, safety must remain a top priority. The tragic August 1, 2007 collapse of Interstate 35 in Minnesota was a sobering reminder that the Federal government and transportation officials must be proactive to ensure the safety of our National infrastructure.

Accordingly, I request a report on how Amtrak intends to address the concerns raised in the article. Moreover, it is my understanding that Amtrak owns about 1,400 bridges in the United States. Do the conditions in the Philadelphia region reflect a national state of disrepair for Amtrak-owned bridges? If so, what is your plan to address this national problem?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and prompt response my inquiry.

Sincerely,



Arlen Specter

AS:ah